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ADVANTAGES OF THE DOUBLE-SIX ORGANIZATION

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In certain educational centers there is much discussion as to what type of organization will prove most efficient for the upper six grades. In a democratic country there will probably be no stereotyped organization for all communities. Many times the small school system meets with disaster in attempting to take over the methods and organization of the large system. The question is often asked by school officials: "Can the small school system operate successfully a junior high school or any other type of reorganization?" Probably the answer lies in the type of organization that is attempted.

Early in 1915 conditions seemed to justify an attempt at reorganization of the upper six grades in Oakland City, Indiana. The school board was planning a new building. Teachers of the seventh and eighth grades were making a detailed study of departmental teaching. Many parents felt that their children could make more rapid progress through the seventh and eighth grades than the teacher-room plan permitted. If grades were skipped, the parents feared that something important might be omitted. The administration felt that much could be eliminated from the seventh and eighth grades and that the time saved should be spent on secondary subjects. Furthermore, the state legislature had just passed its vocational law requiring that industrial arts, domestic economy, and agriculture be offered to students of the upper six grades. In the school of which I write the work of the upper four grades was done by five teachers. This,

according to a recent report by the state inspector of Indiana high schools, is the average number of teachers in Indiana high schools. Hope was placed in the double-six organization, and after three years of experience there appear to be many advantages in this type of organization for an Indiana school system of average size.

Probably the greatest advantage that comes to the youth from the double-six organization in a small community is social in its nature. The over aged individual in a low grade finds opportunity to associate with those of his age and size. He has times when his embarrassment is not great. Constant embarrassment causes many to leave school. Too often the lack of numbers with a sameness of purpose is a handicap of the small school. After the seventh and eighth grades were organized as a regular portion of the high school we had an organization that was 60 per cent larger than the former high school. Size is not the chief factor in the social work of the school; but at times it does afford a certain inspiration and instil in the adolescent a pride in his school. Large schools have sufficient numbers for various social activities with some other type of organization, and the double-six organization provides this first necessity for the small system.

School activities of a general nature receive an added impetus. All six grades participate in patriotic and inspirational singing regularly. All listen many times to the same general exercises. These are sometimes musical programs, sometimes vocational talks, discussions of current topics, moral discourses, and talks upon problems of special interest to the school. Any other type of school organization would not contain the spirit, force, and interest manifest on such occasions by the combined group. At the annual school socials the seventh and eighth grades were present and entered into the games and activities of the evening. Care was exercised in selecting games which would interest the varying ages.

A spirit of bigness, pervading such gatherings, poured over into the school day. At the end of the school year all six grades participated in the production of a school annual. Pictures of the year's activities in the lower of the six grades had as much interest to the parents, friends, and students as the activities of the higher grades. It is strenuous indeed to finance an annual with a small number of students interested. The seventh and eighth grades worked with the upper grades in a mock political convention which would have been a miniature affair without the lower grades. In such activities the advantages do not all fall to the lower grades. The leaders in the upper grades have a greater range of activity.

A field meet was held in which the six grades contested with each other. In this social activity a relative value was placed on records made, somewhat as suggested in the *School Review* for May, 1915, pages 347-49. By this scheme each participant counted for something for his class whether he was the winner or not, and his efforts counted to the extent of his efficiency. We did not limit ourselves to standard contests. Activities to be performed were selected of such nature that the lower classman often excelled the upper classman. We had, for example, a kite-flying contest. This was won by an eighth-grade boy. Often there is an overaged boy in the seventh or eighth grade who stands high with the upper classmen in athletics. Such a pupil is likely to take great pride in what he can do for his class. In fact, not a few times it occurs that this is his only opportunity to stand well among his fellows in a school activity.

As to the special group activities, there is greater opportunity for success under the new organization. In presenting to the public dramas, musical programs, and oratorical contests there are more students from whom to select and more talent interested in the production. Clubs were organized for the improvement of the members in various lines of activity.

Interested twelfth-grade and eighth-grade pupils worked together in the same organization. The Foreign Language Club had a twelfth-grade student for president, but many of its members were eighth-grade children. Our school supported two orchestras. Members were selected in the seventh grade if possible, so that they were under the director's instruction for a sufficient number of years to become proficient. Any other type of organization in a small system could maintain this social activity only in rare instances, because out of the many only a few are chosen.

By departmentalization of the work of the seventh and eighth grades a better distribution of the teaching force was possible, even in the upper four grades. Specialization cannot be so complete as in very large high schools, but specialization to some extent is possible. With an enrolment of 250 in the upper six grades we were enabled to assign 50 per cent of the teachers only two lines of work. The other 50 per cent had three lines of work. Assignments to the various teachers were as follows: science and commercial work; Latin and mathematics; English and music; social science and domestic economy; history, domestic economy, and art; English, mathematics, and science; mathematics, English, and commercial work; manual training, agriculture, and mathematics. All of the manual training in the upper six grades was done by the same teacher. This was also true of art, music, agriculture, and, this year, of domestic economy. From the student's standpoint specialization brings contact with a larger number of college graduates. Specialization under the double-six plan provides contact with more men, since all teachers of the upper six grades have relations with the pupils in all six grades daily either in recitation or in the study-hall. During the school year of 1917-18, 63 per cent of the teachers of the upper six grades were men.

The administration was enabled to put into practice several principles that were impossible under the former organization. The boys received instruction in hygiene from a man, while the girls received such instruction from a woman teacher. Thus sex segregation was accomplished for health instruction. The work of the seventh and eighth grades was grouped so that a pupil did not have so many recitations daily as formerly. The periods were fifty minutes long. This gave time for concentration of effort. Each pupil recited during four such periods daily. This type of organization makes it possible for a long and continued acquaintance to exist between the teacher and the pupil. A system of this size is not so large but that the teachers can be in frequent conferences concerning pupils and subject-matter. Thus many of the impositions attributed to the specialist are avoided.

Promotion by subject saves the slow pupil from failure by the year or half-year, and assists the bright pupil in gaining time as rapidly as he can. Many pupils complete the six-year course in five or five and one-half years. In the second semester of the school year 1917-18 approximately 26 per cent of the eighth-grade students failed sufficiently to have made it necessary for them to do again the whole semester's work. Owing to promotion by subject, 18 per cent of these students lost only a portion of their work. Thus for most of the students who failed there was a gain as compared with the conditions under the former plan. During the same semester in this same grade 10 per cent gained time by doing more than the regular work of the grade. A limited amount of election is feasible without increasing the number of teachers. All of the seventh-grade work was required. The eighth grade selected a foreign language; the pupils of this grade might also elect typewriting and thus start a commercial course. During some semesters bright pupils might take algebra, by this means helping themselves through the course more rapidly. By law manual training and

agriculture were required of all boys, and domestic economy was required of all girls in the seventh and eighth grades.

Greater freedom is given the students in their movements about the building, as well as in their program of work. More responsibility is placed upon the individual. The seventh and eighth grades thoroughly enjoy these liberties and responsibilities. They feel that they are treated more as men. The fact that these six grades are thrown together causes no extra trouble in discipline; cheerful workers seldom or never cause trouble. Probably the flexibility of the program of work is best understood by an example. One boy during the first semester of 1917-18 did English 8A, General Science 8A, Social Science 8A, Latin 9B, and Algebra 9A.

The common use of the equipment is an economical measure made possible by the double-six organization. Equipment for the small school costs practically as much as for a system that uses its equipment all day. Naturally it is in the interest of economy to use a single equipment as much as possible. In the school of which I write the same domestic science equipment is used by all six grades. Also the same shop, the same laboratory, the same library, and the same study-halls are used by all six grades. The general science of the eighth grade, the botany of the ninth grade, the agriculture classes, and the physical sciences of the junior and senior years, all use the same laboratory. Not all, but much of the apparatus is considered common property.

It is possible to maintain a double-six organization in this community without materially increasing the cost of maintenance. The actual cost for instruction under the new management for the year 1916-17 was \$19.60 per pupil annually. This is practically the same as the cost under the room-teacher plan. Dr. Childs in his *Reorganization Movement in the Grammar Grades*, pages 116-17, expresses this same thought for Indiana schools. We have operated the schools with the same

number of teachers needed under the eight-four organization. Salaries should have been increased, but as a matter of fact they have not been except as a war measure. The size of the classes is not large; large classes are not common in small schools.

The six-three-three organization has many objections in the average Indiana high school. There would be a break between the ninth and tenth grades, probably as great as has existed between the eighth and ninth grades. No doubt there is just as great difference between algebra and geometry, as these subjects are ordinarily taught, as there is between arithmetic and algebra. Students' programs could not include subjects in both the ninth and tenth grades. Of necessity the teachers would be separate and distinct in these two groups. Specialization would be less in evidence, since each teacher in any given subject could span only three years. Thus each teacher would scatter over the curriculum more than by the eight-four or the six-six plan. In many of the high schools of average size in Indiana a large number of rural children enter the ninth grade. In Oakland City approximately 30 per cent of the ninth grade was rural. By the six-three-three plan this group would be only one year in the junior high school. Then its members would pass to another group of teachers for the last three years of work. This group of rural students would not feel that they were entering the regular high school. Such an attitude would not be conducive to the best school spirit. Limited numbers in each of the upper three groups of the six-three-three organization would handicap the extra-school activities. Neither would contain sufficient numbers for many group activities. The cost would be greater for the six-three-three type because much of the equipment would need to be in duplicate. If the two upper departments were housed separately, there would be additional outlay for buildings and for the administration of the system. The group

of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades should be easily accessible to all children. In large cities this geographical factor will demand a larger number of junior high schools than senior high schools because many students by choice or necessity are eliminated from the senior high school. This geographical factor does not enter into the problem of the smaller communities. The evidence presented above indicates that the six-six organization has many advantages over other types of organizations for the small or medium-sized community. However, there may be a maximum size beyond which the six-three-three organization is the type that will give greatest service.